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Sawtooth Idaho

Wild, Civilized,
Uncrowded P.54

rising Summer Salads P.60

rip Irrigation: Planning,
Installing a System P.68

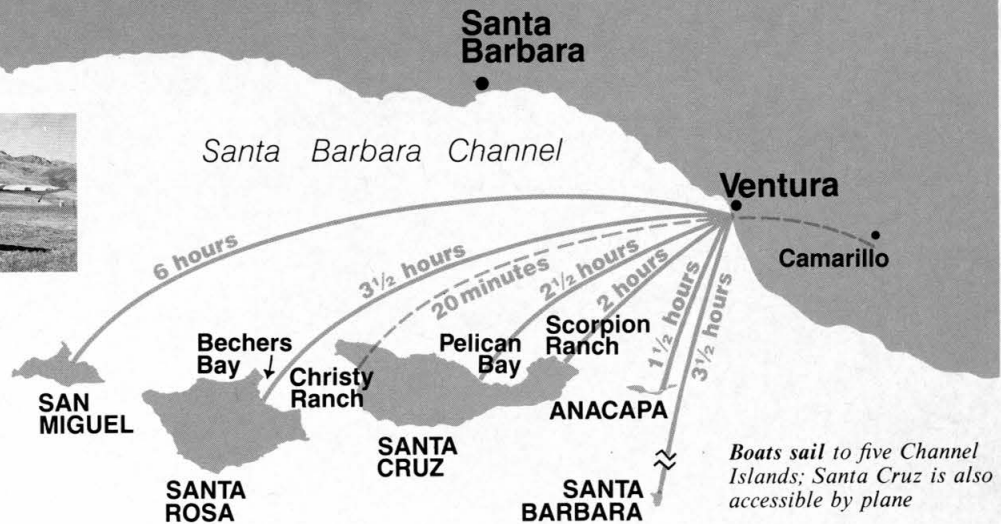
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Grass landing strip is terminus for Santa Cruz-bound planes



Channel Islands adventures: new ways to get there and to get around

The minute you set foot on any of the Channel Islands, manmade noise is lost to gull cries and seal barks and the crash of waves on rock. It's easy to believe you've left not just the Southern California mainland but the 20th century as well.

Five islands—San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, Anacapa, and Santa Barbara—make up Channel Islands National Park. This summer, visitors will find easier access and improved facilities.

Santa Cruz Island: big and various

The biggest Channel Islands news is from the biggest island, 96-square-mile Santa Cruz. For 50 years, about 90 percent of Santa Cruz was a cattle ranch, owned by the Stanton family. In 1978, The Nature Conservancy acquired an interest in this portion; it took control last December, and will run the land as a preserve within the national park. (The remaining fraction, Scorpion Ranch, continues as a working ranch under separate ownership but can also be visited: see details at right.)

What makes Santa Cruz special is not just size but variety. Two rugged mountain ranges enclose a fertile central valley. The coastline shifts from cliffs to broad beaches to secluded coves.

The vegetation is diverse. On dry slopes, natural barrenness has been exaggerated by years of grazing. Other slopes are thick with chaparral; still others hold stands of Santa Cruz Island oak and ironwood, the



Ridgetop aerie on Santa Cruz Island looks due north down Laguna Canyon to the Pacific. Island is varied in both topography and plant life

latter an ice-age species once common in North America but now found only on two Channel Islands. Santa Cruz is a natural odd-lot store: eight plant species grow here and nowhere else on earth.

Animal life is similarly quirky. The Island scrub jay is a fourth again as big as its mainland counterpart, and the Island fox is smaller than its cousins on shore.

Ways to visit Santa Cruz

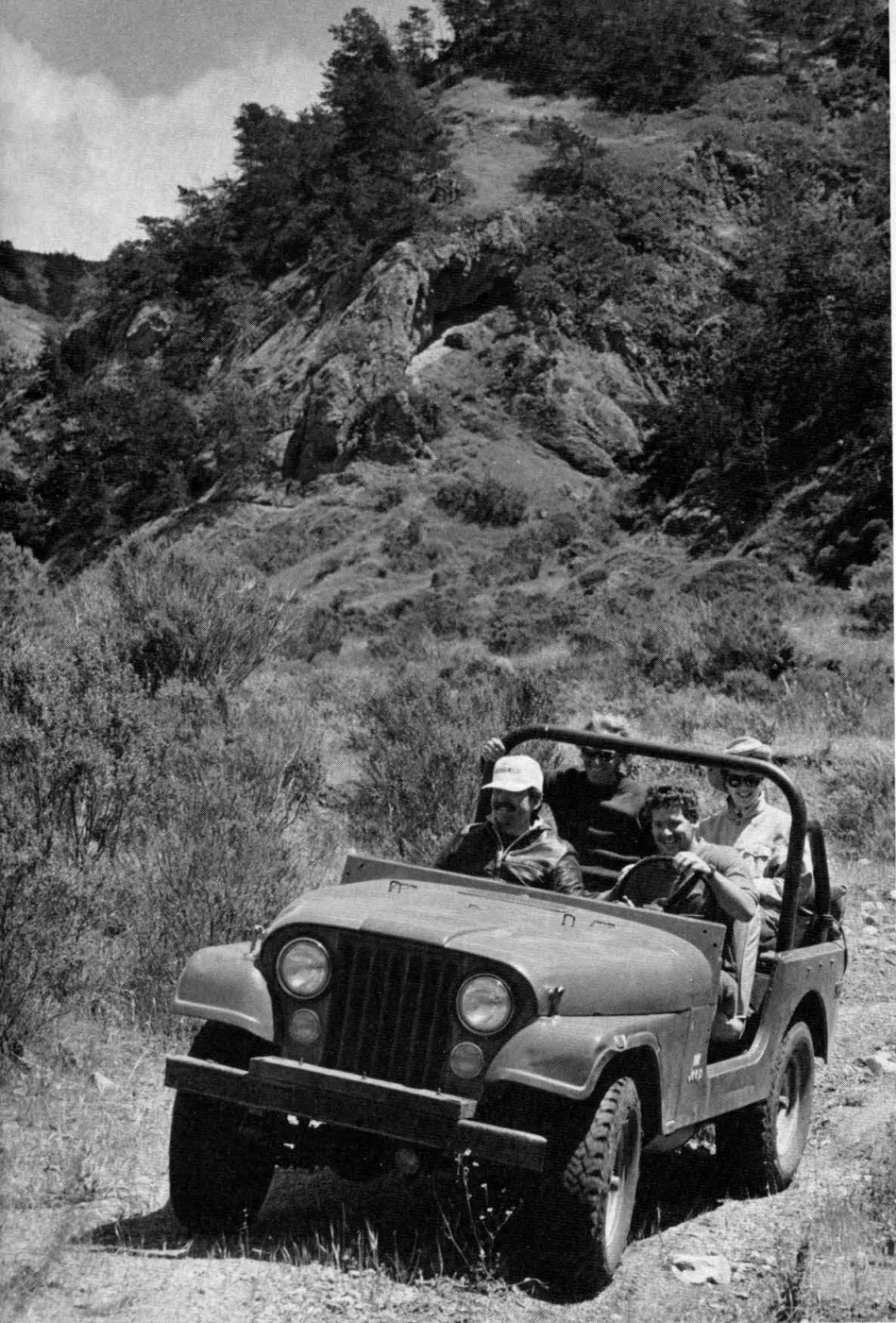
Visitors have a choice of day and longer trips. If you go to this or any of the other Channel Islands, be prepared for mercurial summer weather—bright sun dimming to damp fog and bone-chilling winds.

Here are the day-trip options.

By boat to Pelican Bay. The Nature Conservancy sponsors trips from Ventura Harbor. You board one of Island Packers' boats for a 2 1/2-hour cruise, during which a conservancy naturalist introduces you to the Santa Barbara Channel and the islands. From Pelican Bay, you're led on a 1 1/2-mile hike that focuses on the island's natural history.

Trips are scheduled for July 9 and 21, August 7 and 20, September 17 and 25, October 15, and November 5; additional trips are open to Nature Conservancy members only. Trip cost is \$36 per person. For information and reservations, write or call Island Packers, 1867 Spinnaker Dr., Ventura 93001; (805) 642-1393. Children

FREDERICA GEORGIA



Jeeps haul visitors across Santa Cruz, largest of the Channel Islands. Much of this island is a nature preserve, newly accessible this summer

under 10 are not permitted on trips.

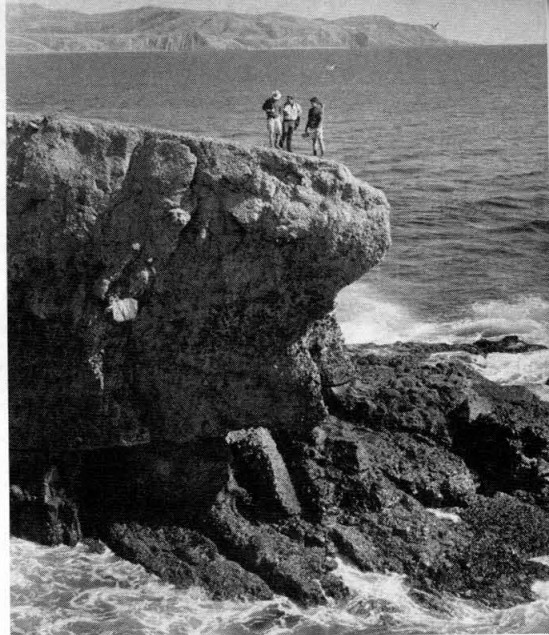
By boat to Scorpion Ranch. Island Packers also runs trips to Scorpion Ranch on Santa Cruz's eastern tip. You spend 4 hours on the island, touring the 19th-century ranch buildings, then hiking to explore other portions of the property. The fare is \$36 for adults, \$26 for children.

By plane to Christy Ranch. Channel Islands Adventures offers day trips out of Camarillo. A 20-minute flight gives an overview of Anacapa and Santa Cruz before landing you near Fraser Point on Santa Cruz's western tip. Here you explore the point's tidepools, bluffs, and coves; then get back in the plane for a quick flight to Christy Ranch. Lunch is served at this renovated 1864 adobe; afterward, you head

off on a four-wheel-drive excursion into nearby canyons. You return by plane to Camarillo in late afternoon. Cost is \$95 for adults, \$75 for children under 16. Write or call Channel Islands Adventures, 305 Durley St., Camarillo 93101; 987-1678.

And for overnight or longer visits:

Channel Islands Adventures also offers four- and five-day trips that give you a chance to see much more of Santa Cruz. You fly to the west side, then join a jeep tour heading into the mountains, to Pelican Bay, or elsewhere on the island—or hike and beachcomb on your own. You stay in simple but comfortable rooms at Christy Ranch, or nearby tents. Rates are the same for both four- and five-day trips: \$430 in rooms, \$340 in tents, with transportation



Breaker-battered Fraser Point juts from west tip of Santa Cruz Island

and all meals included.

Scorpion Ranch, at the island's eastern tip, is also available for overnight stays. Island Packers offers two-day and longer trips from Ventura. Prices start at \$100 per person, including boat transportation; bring your own food.

Island Adventures, which runs Scorpion Ranch, also runs a ranch popular with fishermen, at nearby Smuggler's Cove. Cost is \$300 to \$350 for a three-day stay, meals and air transportation included; the ranch is set up for groups of 12 but individuals can hook up with existing groups. For information, write or call Island Adventures, c/o Owens, 907 Daly Rd., Ojai 93023; 646-2513.

Private boats wishing to land at The Nature Conservancy's portion of Santa Cruz must have permits: \$15 for a 30-day, \$50 per year; write to the Santa Cruz Island Company, Box 23259, Santa Barbara 93120.

Other news on other islands

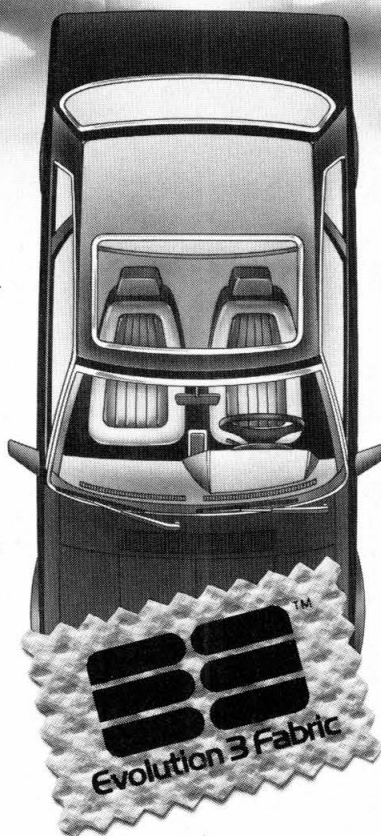
San Miguel. The westernmost of the islands, windswept San Miguel is most famous for its seal and sea lion breeding ground at Point Bennett. Inland features include a caliche forest, trees eerily preserved in white calcium carbonate.

New this year is a Park Service campground with space for 30 campers. It sits about 1½ miles inland from the landing at Cuyler Harbor. From the campground, rangers lead 6- to 14-mile-long guided hikes. Camping on San Miguel—and on Anacapa and Santa Barbara—requires a permit, obtainable at Channel Islands National Park, 1901 Spinnaker Dr., Ventura 93001; 644-8262. Campers on San Miguel and the other islands must bring water and fuel with them.

You can visit San Miguel on a 6-hour Island Packers trip out of Ventura. Trips run July 10, August 6 and 7, and October 8. Fare is \$60 for adults, \$50 for children.

Santa Rosa. Due east of San Miguel,

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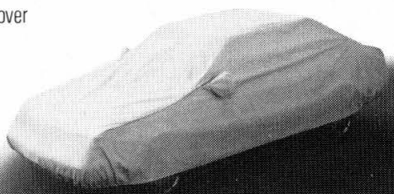
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Santa Rosa—second largest of the islands—was added to the national park only last summer; it's open for day visits only. After landing at Bechers Bay, visitors join rangers for shoreline hikes to a Torrey pine grove (Santa Rosa is the only place outside of San Diego County where this graceful tree grows naturally).

Island Packers has scheduled day trips to Santa Rosa July 9, 23, and 30, August 5 and 31, September 10 and 24, and October 9. Fare is \$60 for adults, \$50 for children. And two-day trips, in conjunction with visits to San Miguel, are slated for August 12 and 13, September 3 and 4, and October 1 and 2. Cost is \$170, \$150 for children.

Anacapa. Actually composed of three islets—West, Middle, and East—Anacapa lies 14 miles south of Ventura. Only East Anacapa has visitor facilities, but it's the easiest-to-reach portion of the entire national park, and boats land daily.

East Anacapa rangers lead hikes daily in summer. One particularly interesting program runs Tuesday and Thursday afternoons: on underwater video monitors, visitors watch Park Service divers explore the kelp forest offshore. (For more on California's kelp forests, see page 204.)

East Anacapa's 30-site campground is often full on summer weekends: try a mid-week visit to avoid crowds.

Through September, Island Packers runs boats to East Anacapa daily. Round-trip fare is \$31, \$16 for children.

Island Packers also offers trips to Frenchy's Cove, on West Anacapa; these run July 13, 20, and 24, August 10, 14, 20, and 21, and September 3, 4, 24, and 25.

On Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, there are half-day nonlanding trips around the island; these cost \$16, \$9.50 for children.

Santa Barbara. At 640 acres, Santa Barbara is the smallest of the Channel Islands, a steep-cliffed terrace topped by two peaks. Six miles of trails lead around the island, past stands of giant coreopsis (dull brown now, blazing yellow in winter) that form the dominant vegetation.

A 30-site campground ¼ mile inland from the landing cove provides a less-crowded alternative to Anacapa. Permits can be obtained through the Park Service.

From Ventura, Island Packers runs trips to the island through early September. Fare is \$44 for adults, \$30 for children.

Exhibits in Ventura, Santa Barbara

If you can't manage a trip to the islands, you can still get an introduction to them.

In Ventura, Channel Islands National Park's visitor center (1901 Spinnaker Drive) offers exhibits, films, and talks; it's open 8 to 5:30 Sundays through Thursdays, to 7 Fridays and Saturdays.

Up in Santa Barbara, The Nature Conservancy's headquarters, on Stearns Wharf, has exhibits on Santa Cruz Island; it's open noon to 4 daily. Call 962-9111.

Next door is the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History's Sea Center, with aquariums and a spectacular gray whale model. It's open daily from 11 to 7; admission is \$1. Call 962-0885. □